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TAGS: PREL KMDR KPAL KWBG KPAO IS
SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/08): "SIGNS OF A TRUCE AND THE ESCALATION OF WAR"

Main Stories:

All papers lead with Gaza news in red and black headline fonts denoting crisis reporting. Al Quds leads with the Palestinian death toll since the beginning of Israeli operations in Gaza 12 days ago: more than 700 dead and at least 3,000 injured. The paper adds that deaths on January 7 included five members of the same family, three sisters and two other children. Al Ayyam leads with reporting on Israel's decision to expand its "aggression" on Gaza and estimates the January 7 death toll of Palestinians at 44, 14 of whom were children. Al Hayat Al Jadida leads with reports about "continued massacres" in Gaza as people await "calm diplomacy" at the UN Security Council to produce results.

In photo coverage, Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida lead with photos of prayers at a mass burial in Gaza for the victims of a January 6 Israeli "attack" on a UN school, the Palestinians' bodies lay in a row, draped in Hamas and Fatah flags. Al Quds runs a lead photo of a Palestinian consoling two mourning women.

All papers report that Israel has announced a three-hour, daily ceasefire in Gaza that will also be respected by Hamas. Al Ayyam further notes that 12 Israeli tanks rolled into the southern Gaza Strip and headed for Khan Yunis, while Israeli jets dropped leaflets on Rafah residents instructing them to evacuate in advance of Israeli army plans to target the area. The paper continues that Egypt has drafted plans to deal with possible mass displacement of Palestinians into Egypt, following a ceasefire in Gaza.

Al Quds' front page quotes Palestinian Authority President Abbas before the UN Security Council in New York on January 7, demanding a halt to the "massacre" against Palestinians in Gaza and freedom for his people. Meanwhile, Al Quds' and Al Ayyam's front pages report that Secretary Rice and British Foreign Minister Miliband met with Arab foreign ministers, except those of Qatar and the Arab League,

to win their support for a Security Council resolution supporting an Egyptian-French ceasefire proposal. Al Ayyam continues, citing Reuters, that Rice is also pressuring Israel "to move closer" to the Egyptian-French plan. The paper highlights Rice stating that a "we believe a ceasefire is necessary, but it has to be a ceasefire that will not allow a return to the status quo. Of course - the status quo ante." The paper calls the UN Security Council meetings "intense" and notes that the Council is preparing to issue its own statement, instead of an Arab draft regarding a cease-fire in Gaza. Finally, Al Ayyam's front page cites London-based Al Hayat newspaper in revealing that Egypt's President Mubarak has invited Israeli Premier Olmert to Cairo on January 10 to discuss a ceasefire in Gaza.

President-elect Obama is quoted on the front pages of Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida from a January 7 press conference cited by AFP, reiterating that he will begin work on a solution to the Middle East conflict the moment he assumes presidential office, but does not want to send a confusing message to the world that there are two U.S. administrations. The paper also cites the Washington Post in reporting that Gaza truce negotiators are discussing ideas to eliminate the problem of smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt borders. According to reporting, one of the ideas being discussed is the construction of a massive underground wall along the border, where an estimated 150 of the 300 tunnels have been destroyed by Israel.

Coverage of rocket attacks on Israel and Israeli military deaths is downplayed in the dailies. Al Ayyam mentions on its front page and continues on an inside page, news agency items reporting on 20

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Palestinian rockets landing in Israel on January 7, causing 20 people to "suffer panic," the injury of 8 and damage to homes. The paper also runs figures from the Israeli military confirming 9 soldiers wounded on January 7, in addition to statements by Islamic Jihad of a "direct [rocket] hit" on an Israeli commando army unit in the northern Gaza Strip and a Hamas statement claiming the killing of an Israeli soldier east of Gaza's Tuffah neighborhood.

Al Quds cites DPA in an above-the-fold article reporting on EU expectations that a ceasefire in Gaza will soon be reached, despite the meager success achieved by its delegation to the Middle East. Al Quds further reports that although Israel has expressed satisfaction over provisions in the Egyptian-French cease-fire proposal to stop smuggling through Gaza-Egypt tunnels, Israel has not yet made a final decision whether or not to accept the proposal.

Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page cites AFP in quoting statements by Hizbullah chief Nasrallah stating on January 7 that, "all options in Lebanon remain open" in light of developments in Gaza.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al Quds' editorial is titled, "Signs of a truce... and the escalation of war!" (01/08): "Observers of the war in Gaza note a clear contradiction between Israeli positions and their obvious determination to conduct war and bring destruction. Israel halted bombing for a few hours on humanitarian grounds, declared its acceptance of the Egyptian-French truce proposal and sent a delegation to discuss [the proposal] in Cairo... Yet, Israel has also, not only continued its bloody and destructive bombing of different areas of the Strip, but has also warned Rafah [Egypt] border area residents to evacuate in advance of further bombing or perhaps the complete destruction of the area under the pretext that it houses tunnels used for arms smuggling... Despite signs of a truce agreement, it seems that the destructive war will in fact continue for several more days."

2) Jawad Al Bashiti opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "A peace that is worse and more dangerous than war" (01/08): "If Israel ['s goal was] a lasting ceasefire with Gaza, based on the withdrawal of its troops and settlers from [Gaza], then on the same basis, Israel

should recognize the rights of all Palestinians to a ceasefire in all [of the Palestinian Territories].... Should Israel agree to a ceasefire in both Gaza and the West Bank, it must withdraw all its troops and settlers as it did in the [Gaza] Strip. [I say] Yes to an "international force" provided it guarantees security for both sides... in the West Bank as well, and... provided that it is part of an "interim international administration, under the UN... lifting the Israeli military occupation... Yes to the reopening of all crossings, provided that 'passage' between Gaza and the West Bank is also opened."

WALLES